DEVELOPING OPERATIONALLY– PROFICIENT LINGUISTS: IT'S ABOUT TIME

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ABSTRACT

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DEVELOPING OPERATIONALLY-PROFICIENT LINGUISTS: IT'S ABOUT TIME

> Language is the most complex of human behaviors and the least
> understood of human endeavors.
>
> —Dr. Ray Clifford, Former Chancellor, Defense Language Institute

Introduction

September 11th, 2001 and the subsequent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq

served as a harsh wake-up call for America and especially for the U.S. Intelligence

Community. The 9/11 Commission Report noted several shortfalls in performing joint

intelligence work. These shortfalls ranged from flaws in the Intelligence Community's

organizational structure and division of responsibilities to an inability to effectively

manage intelligence priorities and share information among the 16 intelligence

agencies.[1] Among the prominent shortfalls within the Department of Defense (DoD) was

the lack of foreign language capabilities. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

reported,

> "Prior to September 11th, the Intelligence Community was not prepared to
> handle the challenge it faced in translating the volumes of foreign
> language counterterrorism intelligence it collected. Agencies within the
> Intelligence Community experienced backlogs in material awaiting
> translation, a shortage of language specialists and language-qualified field
> officers, and a readiness level of only 30% in the most critical terrorism
> languages."[2]

In response to the dearth of foreign language capabilities and cultural and

regional expertise, the Department of Defense in partnership with the Center for

Advanced Study of Language sponsored an unprecedented national language

conference. This forum brought together federal agencies, academia, education,

industry, language experts, and research professionals. The conference framed 9/11

and its aftermath as a "Sputnik moment" referring to the 1957 Soviet launch of the

Sputnik 1 rocket, which motivated Congress to pass the 1958 National Defense

Education Act (NDEA) in response to America's perception of Soviet superiority in

technology.[3] Dr. David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness,

noted,

> "Congress immediately passed the National Defense Education Act to respond to the threat of Soviet technological superiority. The generation of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, linguists, and area specialists created by this act put a man on the moon, helped win the Cold War, and today has a spacecraft 756 million miles from Earth soaring amidst the rings of Saturn."[4]

Given DoD's shortfalls in foreign language capabilities and regional and cultural

expertise, 9/11 served as a "Sputnik moment" that merited a response similar to the

1958 NDEA toward developing language and cultural capabilities equal to the

challenges of this century.[5]

This landmark language conference was one of many post-9/11 collaborations

that have led to significant and unprecedented policies, programs, and appropriations

designed to improve the language capacity of the United States. Time will determine the

effectiveness of many of these policies and programs and whether these efforts will be

sufficient to adequately meet the challenges of the 21st century strategic environment.

America's foreign language shortfall is not a new revelation. In the early 1980s,

the late Senator Paul Simon indicated,

> "We are linguistically malnourished. Yet never in history has there been one nation with such a variety of ethnic and language backgrounds. This language inattention threatens our national security interests; the adverse impact on the nation's economy is immense."[6]

The bottom line is the United States is long overdue in building a national framework

that addresses foreign language and cultural illiteracy and develops the professional-

level expertise capable of performing tasks critical to our national security and economic prosperity.

Language and Culture

When referring to the level of expertise required in the National Security Community, language and culture must be addressed together. Professional-language proficiency is not attainable without an understanding of the language in its cultural context. The Commandant at Defense Language Institute describes the school's curriculum as "culturally-based language training" with language and culture "inextricably intertwined."[7] Leading scholars agree that language and culture are inseparable. Dr. Michael Agar, a linguistic anthropologist, coined the term "languaculture," asserting that language and culture can never be discussed without the other.[8] Hence, one of the key strategic objectives of the United States National Security Community should be to achieve foreign language and cultural expertise. This paper's frequent use of foreign language expertise assumes cultural expertise is embedded in all language development endeavors.

Changing Times

The 21st century operating environment promises to be as challenging as that of any previous era. Strategic leaders must address several key trends that will define global long-term challenges. The National Defense Strategy identifies these challenges to national security as violent extremist ideologies, rogue states seeking weapons of mass destruction, and rising military and economic powers.[9]

These threats and others will combine with global trends which will create greater uncertainty and challenges to the world's security and economic growth. Global trends

are both natural and man-made in nature. The Joint Operating Environment 2010 outlines major trends that will affect global security. These trends include world demographics, globalization, trade and finance imbalances, government spending and revenue, defense spending, energy resources, food and water supply, climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, and the control of the cyber and space domains.[10]

Each trend has direct or indirect implications on global security. When these macro trends are combined with the aforementioned regional security threats, wicked problems emerge. Despite America's best efforts to predict threats and trends and plan for appropriate contingencies, surprises and unexpected events will undoubtedly occur. Americans should also expect a global environment with unforeseen second and third order effects caused by the action or inaction of the United States, its allies and adversaries. In short, the world continues to be a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) place to live. Because of the unsettling prospect of operating in a VUCA environment, the U.S. National Security Community needs foreign language expertise and cultural competency more than ever to effectively partner with allies, confront adversaries, and meet the challenges of this century and beyond.

The greater the worldwide impact of these global trends and regional threats, the more critical language and cultural expertise will be to successful engagement.[11] The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap (DLTR) asserts that the United States will experience persistent "conflict against enemies speaking less-commonly-taught languages and thus the need for foreign language capability will not abate."[12]

Foreign language and cultural expertise can enable strategic leaders to better understand the strategic operational environment and inform decision making. The

DLTR further states that "robust foreign language and foreign area expertise are critical to sustaining coalitions, pursuing regional stability, and conducting multi-national missions."[13] The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) lists language and cultural skills among those enabling capabilities without which the United States faces significant risk to operational missions.[14]

Intelligence is King

In today's conflicts, intelligence is king of the unconventional fight and foreign language expertise is the great enabler that allows for actionable intelligence. Ellen Laipson of the National Intelligence Council stated,

> "One cannot overstate the centrality of foreign language skills to the core mission of the Intelligence Community. Foreign languages come into play at virtually all points of the intelligence cycle, from collection to exploitation, to analysis and production. The collection of intelligence depends heavily on language, whether the information is gathered from a human source through a relationship with a field officer or gathered from a technical system."[15]

More than ever, intelligence drives operations and relies heavily on our ability to process an overwhelming volume of collected information with a limited supply of qualified foreign language experts. Foreign language expertise is not only paramount to national security, but also among our greatest vulnerabilities. Soon after the events of 9/11, it became evident that foreign language expertise was among DoD's greatest shortfalls. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence identified foreign language capabilities as "the single greatest limitation in the Intelligence Community."[16] This need stems from the fact that too often data is collected, but our capacity to process it into intelligence in a timely manner and correctly identify the indications and warnings soon enough to take appropriate action is lacking.

Foreign language skills were a concern in previous conflicts, but the current unconventional threats have upped the ante in terms of the level of language skills required. Referring to the impact of the technological revolution, the DLTR states,

> "Language skills are insufficient to meet the requirement of the changed security environment. The technological revolution of the 1990s requires much greater language capability than the stereotyped activities of Cold War opponents. A higher level of language skill and great language capacity is needed to build the internal relationships required for coalition/multi-national operations, peacekeeping, and civil-military affairs."[17]

Underscoring the need for professional-level skills to combat current and future threats, the Director of the National Security Agency established a new operational minimum standard for cryptologic linguists at a level 3 on the Interagency Language Roundtable scale,[18] which is the beginning of professional-level proficiency.[19]

This need for foreign language expertise is not new. September 11th, 2001 exposed once again the elephant in the room. The challenge for this generation is to determine how to get the elephant out of the room. The impact of transnational extremism and globalization has moved foreign language readiness once again to the forefront of the national security debate.

Why Americans are Linguistically Malnourished

Before attempting to propose strategic solutions to this decades-old problem, it may be helpful to briefly understand some of the reasons why Americans are not on par with the foreign language expertise of other developed countries. First, the United States is a relatively young nation and after securing its independence from Britain, isolationism was an early theme that largely governed foreign policy.

Second, the geographic position of the United States doesn't create a natural need to develop foreign language expertise. America's neighbors to the north and south

speak English, French, and Spanish, hardly the arsenal of languages needed for national security concerns. Most Americans don't live within close proximity to Mexico or Canada nor do they frequent these countries enough to inspire the need for foreign language education. At best, America's proximity to these two countries has influenced to some degree the foreign language curriculum in secondary education throughout the United States. Ninety three percent of U.S. secondary schools offer Spanish and 46% offer French compared to German (14%), Chinese (4%), Japanese (3%), Arabic (0.6%), and Russian (0.3%).[20]

Third, following World War II, the United States emerged as the world's economic power and English became the lingua franca of international trade, which continues in the current era of globalization. Referring to the global triumph of English, *The Economist* reported,

> "It is everywhere. Some 380 million people speak it as their first language and perhaps two-thirds as many again as their second. A billion are learning it, about a third of the world's population are in some sense exposed to it and by 2050, it is predicted, half the world will be more or less proficient in it. It is the language of globalization—of international business, politics, and diplomacy. It is the language of computers and the Internet."[21]

Finally, the United States ironically prides itself on being a country of immigrants, yet culturally the emphasis has been on strongly encouraging immigrants to learn English and assimilate into American culture. Maintaining other cultures and languages has not only been undervalued, it has in fact been discouraged. Bialystok and Hakuta note, "It is the American thing to do: immigrant parents struggle with English, their children are bilingual, and their children's children are monolingual English-speakers."[22] Fiercely tied to English and American culture, a significant number of Americans bring

into question the patriotism of immigrants to attempt to maintain their heritage cultures

and languages. Leanne Hinton asserts,

> "Despite decades of research findings to the contrary, this is still a
> common belief that bilingualism is bad for children and unpatriotic, and
> that the only way to be a true American is to leave behind any other
> language and allegiance that might be in your background."[23]

These four factors have combined to create a recipe for foreign language

illiteracy and have left the United States ill prepared to face the realities of the 21st

century. While the nation as a whole has undervalued foreign language education and

cultural competency, the Intelligence Community has placed greater value on these

skills. The challenge remains to increase and sustain focus on language and cultural

expertise. The DLTR asserts that "language skill and regional expertise are not valued

as Defense core competencies yet they are as important as critical weapon systems."[24]

<u>What has been accomplished?</u>

While the United States as a whole remains apathetic toward developing

adequate foreign language expertise to protect its national security interests, the events

of 9/11 and its aftermath truly served as a "Sputnik moment" for the Department of

Defense and other government agencies that rely heavily on language skills to

accomplish their diverse missions. This sense of urgency to increase language

expertise was expressed in the White House publication of the 2003 National Strategy

for Combating Terrorism.

> "A key component of this force and asset alignment will be our ability to
> understand the terrorist intent through technical and document
> exploitation. This will require a dramatic increase in linguistic support.
> Consequently, all government agencies will review their language
> programs to ensure adequate resources are available to meet this
> demand."[25]

As insurgencies mounted in both Iraq and Afghanistan, our foreign language vulnerabilities were quickly exposed. The bureaucracy responded with uncharacteristic urgency. The first-ever National Language Conference delivered the 2004 Defense Language Transformation Roadmap, which is comprised of four strategic objectives and some 43 major subtasks to address critical shortfalls in the Department of Defense.[26] Other agencies have followed suit with similar plans. The Foreign Service Institute unveiled its Language Continuum Initiative which is aimed at achieving "broader and more advanced levels of language skills and assists the individual language learner to acquire, maintain, and improve to a high level of competency."[27] The FBI launched a Workforce Planning Initiative and established a Language Services Translation Center to address its foreign language shortfalls.[28] The Director of Central Intelligence published the Strategic Direction for Intelligence Community Foreign Language Activities to provide objectives for investment decisions in language training.[29] President Bush's 2006 National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) was reminiscent of the Eisenhower Administration's 1958 National Defense Education Act. The NSLI was geared toward significant increases to the number of Americans in the primary, secondary, and university education pipeline learning, speaking, and teaching languages critical to national security interests.[30]

The core objectives of the 2004 Defense Language Transformation Roadmap have not lost their importance. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review increased funding by nearly 50 percent to bolster the Defense Language Program including greater investment in technology and training and improving linguist recruiting through the Army Heritage Speaker (09L) Program. This QDR gave greater emphasis on foreign

language at the Service Academies and ROTC programs. It also established the National Language Service Corps pilot program and increased commitment and funding to the National Security Education Program and the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC).[31]

This momentum continues in the 2010 QDR, which contains nearly two dozen references to developing foreign language, cultural, and regional expertise. Highlights include expanded language training centers; language, regional, and cultural training for Special Operations Forces; increasing the capacity of the Foreign Language Immersion Program at the Defense Language Institute; and other initiatives aimed at refining existing language programs, policies, and processes.[32]

One of the landmark resolutions was the Department of Defense's decision to raise the bar on linguist qualifications and establish level 3 as the new minimum standard for language proficiency. This standard acknowledges the challenges of the operational environment and the critical need for more professional-level proficiency. A 2008 House Armed Services Committee report indicates,

> "In 2005, the Department set a new goal of "general professional proficiency" (Level 3) for language professionals in reading, listening, and speaking. Before 2005, military linguists, including FAOs, were expected to achieve limited working proficiency (Level 2) in reading and listening, and, for FAOs, elementary proficiency (Level 1+) in speaking. The Department set this new goal largely due to pressure from the National Security Agency, the main employer of cryptologic specialists."[33]

Without question, the Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Intelligence Community have demonstrated commitment to addressing foreign language shortfalls. However, unlike many problems that are more easily solved with policies, programs, and appropriations, language, which Dr. Ray Clifford describes as the "most complex of human behaviors,"[34] will require sustained efforts and the wisdom to abandon flawed

policies and programs in favor of those that are based on sound, proven strategies that have endured the test of time.

<u>Time-on-Task: The Center of Gravity for Developing Professional Linguists</u>

The Department of Defense acknowledges "that every member of the Department needs fundamental language skills and cultural awareness with a cadre of experts needing higher levels of proficiency."[35] The DoD, with the requisite support of Congress, has acted with atypical agility in establishing cultural awareness and very basic language skills throughout the department. All deploying Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Sailors undergo cultural awareness training and learn a few dozen phrases ranging from greetings to survival commands. Requirements for anywhere from two to four semesters of language training at the Service Academies and ROTC programs have laid the ground work for increased expectations of the Officer Corps. Most of these programs deal with familiarity and basic levels of proficiency that should be required of the future force.[36]

Not surprisingly, the Department of Defense reports difficulties in developing linguists at a professional level.[37] The biggest challenge lies in developing a professional cadre of linguists who can perform critical missions that require near-native to educated-native speaker capabilities. To develop such a force will require orchestrating a number of the many variables that affect language learning. The variables involved in successful foreign language learning are as diverse as the people engaged in learning a foreign language. The prominent factors cited in most research include student aptitude, age when foreign language learning occurs, consistency of

effort, immersion, student motivation, quality of teaching, teacher qualifications, and pedagogical approach.

However, of all of the variables that affect language learning, time-on-task is the most critical and must therefore underpin America's policies and programs and overall national language education framework if it is to develop the professional-level language capacity to meet the demands of the 21st century operating environment. In most research, time-on-task is expressed in different terminology such as consistency with the language or becoming fully immersed in the language. Even the critical factor of motivation implies a commitment of time on the part of the learner.

In 1961, William Parker predicted that the funding of 1958 NDEA would lead to eight and ten year sequences of second language instruction, demonstrated competence in a second language would be required for admission to college, and graduation from college would require demonstrated competence in a third language.[38] Such lengthy periods of time in foreign language have not emerged a half a century later in the United States, but research has always supported the need for such sequences. A study on the teaching of French in eight countries revealed that "the primary factor in the attainment of proficiency in French is the amount of instructional time provided."[39] Presumably the same principle would apply to any other language. Another study of English in eight European countries concluded that "students from nations where there is more contact with English have higher levels of competence in English and in a language-rich environment, time spent using the language is more important than the teaching methods used in the classroom."[40]

Conversely, time-off-task leads to loss of intellectual momentum and gains in highly perishable foreign language learning are reversed. The Director of DoD's newly formed Foreign Language Office recently reported to Congress that "acquiring the necessary language and cultural skills is a time intensive process. Once gained, these skills tend to deteriorate rapidly if not used frequently."[41]

While the DoD has been fairly adept at developing language expertise at a basic skill level, developing a cadre of professional linguists will take much longer. The 2010 QDR acknowledges that "today's operating environment demands a much greater degree of language and regional expertise requiring years, not weeks, of training and education, as well as a greater understanding of the factors that drive social change."[42] While foreign language expertise is an enabling skill to many military occupational specialties, the development of that skill at a professional level or near-native capability takes much longer to develop than the military occupational skill itself.[43]

Developing professional-level linguists is more akin to developing a skilled physician. Prospective medical students require a four-year college degree with a minimum number of science courses and an acceptable score on the Medical College Admission Test to achieve admission to medical school. Once accepted, most programs involve a four-year curriculum followed by three to seven years of residency where a physician gains valuable experience under the mentorship of more experienced medical professionals. Even once residency is complete, the medical profession is constantly evolving and requires medical professionals to be committed to life-long learning. Physicians in residency and beyond learn mostly from daily experience working with patients with real problems.

Developing linguists at a professional level requires a similar commitment of time to achieve near-native and educated-native proficiency levels. Like aspiring medical students, prospective DoD linguists are screened for aptitude using the Defense Language Aptitude Battery. Those who qualify attend a basic language course at the Defense Language Institute ranging from 12 to 18 months depending on the language. The objective of the basic course is to help students achieve only a limited working proficiency level in reading, listening, and speaking that allows the linguist to satisfy routine social demands and limited working requirements.[44] After several months of full-time effort, students have only established a fragile foundation that, if cultivated, can lead to professional levels of proficiency.

While serving as the Dean of the DLI School of Continuing Education, Dr. Thomas Parry asserted that to achieve higher levels of proficiency (Level 3 and higher) requires exponentially more time and effort.[45] Alice Omaggio equates the proficiency levels to an inverted three-dimensional pyramid and contends, "As one goes up the scale, progressively more language skill is needed to attain the next level."[46] Like the medical student, the novice linguist requires additional intermediate and advanced training coupled with years of "language residency" in which the linguist is able to work in real-world situations and receives feedback from more experienced linguists including heritage speakers.[47] Much like the medical profession, a professional linguist interacts with a dynamic, evolving environment in which language usage evolves as well. The national security environment can present challenges to the linguist that range from formal to informal language on topics from the very technical to the coded-street talk of a terrorist or drug trafficker. To keep up with this changing environment, a professional

DoD linguist must be committed to life-long learning and be exposed to a variety of missions.

Time-on-task must forever be the center of gravity around which our policies and programs are geared if we are to develop a cadre of language professionals in the Department of Defense and greater Intelligence Community. However noble our intentions, policies and programs that fail to respect the principle of time-on-task will fall miserably short of the stated objectives and the American taxpayer will see little, if any, return on investment.

Our ability to respond appropriately to crisis depends largely on our ability to develop the lengthy pipeline of linguistic expertise. In attempting to span the immense chasm between where the United States is and where it needs to be in terms of foreign language capability, it will do little good to build multiple bridges that only get America a fraction of the way there.

Policies and programs centered on the principle of time-on-task as the most critical factor to language learning would bring the DoD and other government agencies responsible for national security much closer to the goal of achieving a sufficient number of language professionals. This paper offers strategic recommendations to policy geared toward developing operationally-proficient language professionals.

Changing American Culture

September 11th served as a call to action for the National Security Community and senior leaders have recognized the nexus between the nation's cultural and foreign language competency and its national security and economic prosperity. In the 2010 National Security Strategy, President Obama stated,

"We will support programs that cultivate interest and scholarship in foreign languages and intercultural affairs, including international exchange programs. This will allow our citizens to build connections with peoples overseas and to develop skills and contacts that will help them thrive in the global economy."[48]

Secretary Gates is even more emphatic about the critical nature of foreign language expertise. The 2010 QDR contains an unprecedented number of references to foreign language and cultural expertise. The 2010 Department of State's Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review indicates the department is conducting a comprehensive review of its approach to recruiting, developing, managing, and sustaining language capability aimed at improving the expertise of U.S. Diplomatic Corps.[49]

Despite these efforts geared toward ensuring our national security, Americans as a whole have little incentive to learn foreign languages at a professional level. America's youth don't grow up with the idea that learning a second language fluently has any bearing on their career success. Instead, foreign language education is thought of as little more than a trivial pursuit or hobby. This fact is reflected in the relatively low enrollments at the secondary and university level and the short duration of foreign language efforts. The Modern Language Association's 2002 and 2006 surveys indicated that 92 percent of college students at all levels are not enrolled in any foreign language courses. Of the few enrolled in foreign language, half enrolled in Spanish and only 11 percent were enrolled in a DoD-critical language with relatively few studying it for more than two years.[50] Lack of demand hinders the American education system from establishing a framework similar to other countries that ensures adequate time is spent learning a second language throughout the primary, secondary, and university education pipeline.

With little incentive to improve its collective foreign language proficiency for economic purposes, the United States will have to create a broader vision to improve the national foreign language framework to support its national security and economic interests. This vision will need to include a robust plan to dramatically increase the pipeline of language professionals to fill the critical national security, diplomatic, and international trade positions requiring higher language skills.

<u>Challenging the Nation</u>

Revolutionizing the nation's foreign language capabilities could serve as a major theme as part of a State of the Union address on education reform. With the backdrop of war in both Iraq and Afghanistan, ongoing concerns with violent extremism, and a struggling global economy, the stage is set to challenge the American people toward greater foreign language and cultural expertise. Much like President Kennedy challenged the nation to put a man on the moon, President Obama could challenge America to achieve the necessary foreign language proficiency to secure national security interests and seize global economic opportunities. A survey on the globalization of professions in the U.S. and Canada indicated that 65% of the world is inaccessible to members of US-based professional-service associations.[51] The same survey cites language and culture as the top two barriers to expanding globally. Dr. Robert Rosen commented on the value of cultural literacy,

> "All business is global, yet all markets are local. This globalized multicultural world needs leaders with a keen understanding of national cultures. By learning from other countries, these leaders develop the best thinking and best practices from around the world enabling them to leverage culture as a tool for competitive advantage."[52]

The President, with the full bipartisan support of Congress, must ensure that Americans understand the implications of failing to achieve national foreign language

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proficiency. A University of Maryland study enumerates potential talking points on America's foreign language needs.

> The nation's requirements for proficiency in languages other than English arise in (a) national security, in other words, political, military, and diplomatic concerns; (b) economic competitiveness, that is, trade, tourism, and quality control of goods and services; and (c) social well being defined as domestic foreign language concerns related to areas such as public health, international development, civil rights, and assimilation and social justice.[53]

Most importantly, Americans need a candid understanding of the time commitment required to achieve higher level language proficiency to ensure our protection, economic prosperity, and social well being.

Establishing a National Foreign Language Framework

Critical to realizing this vision for foreign language expertise is the design of a strategic foreign language framework based on proven models of success in both the United States and other countries. Such a framework must include state and local government designating foreign language as a core part of the primary and secondary education curriculum along with mathematics, science, and social studies. The goal of foreign language education at this level should be for every student to achieve functional proficiency in at least one language other than English and a smaller number achieving advanced proficiency.[54] Foreign language as a part of the core curriculum will increase the time spent studying a foreign language and will allow students to arrive at the university level prepared for advanced language courses and study abroad immersion opportunities.

Rather than mandating the typical one-size-fits-all approach, the federal government should continue to offer federal education grants under the already successful National Language Flagship Initiative (NLFI). This program creates the

essential "language continuum"[55] from elementary school through the university at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.[56] The NLFI supports efforts to establish a language pipeline that leads to filling critical national security and economic positions. NLFI's declared mission "seeks to graduate students who will take their place among the next generation of global professionals, commanding a superior level of proficiency in languages critical to U.S. competitiveness and security."[57]

The NLFI focuses solely on critical need languages on the annually published Department of Defense Strategic Language List.[58] Currently, NLFI languages include Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Persian, and Russian and African languages.[59] The NLFI leverages the experience of decades of successful foreign language education throughout the United States. The key to successfully expanding this program is to award grants to states that have favorable demographics, existing effective primary, secondary, and university foreign language programs, qualified language instructors, and excellent partnerships among government, business, and education.

Experience shows that success tends to breed more success. Expansion of the NLFI funding should be focused on locations and academic environments with the best chance for success. Ohio is one example of how NLFI focuses on areas with existing foreign language infrastructure and favorable demographics to produce greater success. After three years in operation, the Ohio State University Chinese Language Flagship experienced an increase in the number of primary and secondary Chinese language programs as well as the number of enrollments. In the three-year period from 2005 to 2008, Chinese language programs in Ohio increased from 8 to 50 schools and enrollments increased from 777 students to more than 2,000 students.[60]

The NLFI is an example of a proven model for success and is demonstrating tangible results at producing language professionals at the 3, 3+, and 4 levels.[61] The nation would benefit from a steady expansion of the program from its current state. As of 2010, there are 23 Flagship centers and programs, 11 overseas programs, and 3 K-12 programs.[62] Focusing funding on areas with the greatest chance for success will allow for the development of a proven model for success within the American culture.

Foreign language education cannot be an end unto itself, but must focus on developing linguists who can meet the demand for national security language positions and increased global economic opportunities.[63] Such a vision and framework recognizes the years of commitment and consistency required to achieve professional foreign language proficiency.

Immigration Reform

Equally critical to establishing a national framework for foreign language education is reassessing immigration policy. As a nation of immigrants, the U.S. focuses current immigration policy on immigrants learning English and assimilating into American culture. This aspect of the policy is appropriate; however, immigration policy and the American cultural mind set also need to place high value on retaining the foreign language skills and cultural capabilities of our immigrant citizens. Too often, these skills are lost between the second and third generation. Dr. Terrence G. Wiley asserts, "Without active intervention or new immigration, heritage languages are lost over time both in the individuals who speak them and in the community, and they typically die out within three generations."[64]

Strategic communication by senior government and business leaders centered on the nation's national security and economic interests will begin the process of changing American attitudes towards languages other than English. Dr. Amado Padilla stated,

> "Our ultimate goal should be a language-competent U.S. society. This means a society in which all newcomers and individuals from non-English homes have the opportunity to develop the highest possible degree of both social and academic proficiency in English without having to surrender their home language."[65]

The U.S. Census Bureau is a major source of data relating to speakers of languages other than English and represents growing potential to leverage these capabilities to support U.S. interests. The responses from the 2000 Census indicate 18% of respondents spoke a foreign language at home, up from 14% in 1990, and 11% in 1980.[66] The American Community Survey estimated that number would reach 20% by 2010.[67] This 50 percent increase over a twenty-year period suggests a positive trend; however, Spanish accounts for the majority of this increase. The U.S. still lacks sufficient immigration in languages of greatest interest to national security.

As the debate continues on what to do with immigration policy in the United States, senior leaders need to consider the opportunities to capture foreign language capabilities. Included in this debate would be focusing quotas on languages of importance to both national security and economic development. Immigration policy should seek foreign language professionals in critical languages under the special skills program, which is typically reserved for other professionals such as scientists and engineers.[68] These individuals would be required to demonstrate proficiency in English, possess teaching and heritage language credentials, and make a commitment to work in the Intelligence Community, Department of State, or within the U.S. education

system. Hiring non-U.S. citizens with critical language skills to work within the Intelligence Community would pose some risk; however, current practices are already in place to leverage the language capabilities of non-U.S. citizens while protecting sources and methods of intelligence gathering.

An influx of foreign language professionals with excellent English and teaching skills will prime the pump and shorten the amount of time it would otherwise take to develop a cadre of quality teachers to improve the national foreign language framework. Language professionals from the countries the United States has the greatest shortfall for security and economic interests will allow not only for the rapid increase of language capability, but also provide the cultural expertise that is critical to effectively teach and understand foreign languages.

<u>Putting Technology in its Proper Place</u>

The United States has long dominated the global technology domain. Technology has revolutionized virtually every industry, solved difficult problems, and fueled economic prosperity and globalization. Because of its historical success, Americans rightfully have a tendency to look to technology to solve complex problems. If language is among the most complex of human behaviors, then Americans naturally look to technology to solve its linguistic ineptness. However, with regard to developing foreign language proficiency, technology is not a panacea. In fact, within the Department of Defense, technology can actually contribute to increasing the need for foreign language expertise. This is particularly true in the intelligence collection domain. As technology develops improved ways to collect data, the volume of information

needing to be processed dramatically increases and consequently increases the shortfall of foreign language professionals.

Technology will continue to play a critical role in the foreign language arena, but by itself will not solve every foreign language capability shortfall. Dr. Ray Clifford has aptly stated, "Computers will never replace linguists, but linguists that use computers will replace linguists that don't use computers."[69]

In education, technology can increase the efficiency of language learning especially as the education system becomes more and more technology dependent. Technology can allow teachers to focus less time on lesson preparation and more time on interacting with students and providing critical feedback.

The Internet offers today's techno-savvy learners and aspiring foreign language experts access to more authentic language materials than ever before. Despite so much language material available at little or no cost, a lack of commitment to invest time to acquire and improve language proficiency persists. Those that look to take advantage of the world's library of resources must learn to be selective. Technology should aim to assist teachers not replace them. What Dr. Ray Clifford predicted more than a decade ago holds true today.

> "The Internet has been compared to both a worldwide electronic landfill and a worldwide library. Significant differences exist between the Internet and a library. The Internet does not have a quality review process that selects its holdings. It is because of the lack of such a review process that the best search engines on the Internet are not as productive for research and individual learning as the on-line catalogue in a library. The capabilities of the Internet will surely increase, but just as libraries did not eliminate the need for teachers, neither will the Internet. A more productive option is to use the Internet as a delivery mode for teacher prepared instruction."[70]

In the intelligence arena, technology can serve to improve the process for triaging documents and voice intercepts and better inform management on processing priorities. Technology can aid translators by creating draft translations allowing the linguist to focus on the critical task of quality control to ensure creditable intelligence products. Companies like Lingotek have created translation software designed not to replace the human translator, but to increase the performance of the translator by leveraging the strengths of computer power collaboratively with the translator.[71] This capability is especially critical in the Intelligence Community where there is a huge gap between what can successfully be collected and what can actually be processed into actionable intelligence.

Machine translation technologies must not be oversold in their capabilities to successfully support the complexities of intelligence collection. Letitia Long, while serving as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Requirements, and Resources, reported to Congress,

> "What we know now is that these technologies, in the current state-of-art, cannot replace skilled human translators, interpreters and interrogators in providing actionable information. Experienced judgment of the effectiveness places automated translation - in a non-cooperative environment - at the human skill level of "survival plus" (1+) in the ILR scale of 1 to 5 with 5 equating to an educated native speaker."[72]

Sequoyah, an Army Foreign Language Translation System, facilitates two-way foreign language translation of speech and text. However, this program is designed to deal with basic-level requirements thus allowing more experienced translators and interpreters to focus on higher-level tasks.[73]

Any technology development that revolutionizes an industry takes time. Investment in foreign language and communications technology research and

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development is costly, but can provide huge payoffs. Among these payoffs is the ability to shorten time and space through virtual teaming[74] and reach back capabilities. For much of the SIGINT and document exploitation world, technology reduces the need to deploy linguists abroad. Intelligence centers of excellence are well established throughout the United States and can be used to support combat operations and dramatically reduce the high costs of deploying linguists abroad. Most of the processing, including time-sensitive documents and intercepts, can be done through reach back.

DoD Sources for Professional Language Capability

Current Department of Defense strategy calls for developing a cadre of language professionals with an IRL proficiency of 3/3/3 in listening/reading/speaking.[75] As the nation builds a more effective framework for providing a pipeline of foreign language professionals, the DoD will need to continue to recruit and develop this capability from a variety of sources. These sources include the Active Component, the Reserve Component, DoD civilians, and both U.S. and foreign contractors. As the United States works on improving the national foreign language framework and linguist pipeline, the DoD should simultaneously continue to improve each of the current linguist source programs.

The Active Component has the advantage of having more time to commit to the task of developing professional-level linguists. However, determining what military specialties continue to require foreign language proficiency remains a challenge. Because of the high demand for HUMINT collectors to support the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army has waived the language proficiency requirement for this career field and seems unlikely to reinstate it. Experience indicates after substantial investment

in language training, many specialties have extremely low retention rates, which have become even more pronounced due to high deployment rates and in some cases better job opportunities in the civilian sector. Furthermore, military career specialties and language requirements are too often incompatible, that is, a service member is more often than not deployed for his or her intelligence skills rather than the language skill. Signals intelligence specialties are more compatible with foreign language, while HUMINT specialties should plan to rely on contracted language services for support.

DoD civilians provide stability that is difficult to achieve among the uniformed linguists. For enduring requirements, a civilian workforce provides continuity to operations especially when military linguists deploy, rotate to other assignments, or simply chose to leave the military. The DoD civilian workforce can serve to retain military language professionals who have fulfilled their military service commitment or retired. A civilian workforce also allows opportunities for professional linguists who are not desirous or eligible for military service to contribute their expertise to national security.

Contracting U.S. and foreign linguists has been the primary vehicle to meet the needs of the warfighter and the Intelligence Community at large. Contracting serves the nation's interest as a surge capability and a means to access foreign language and cultural expertise not present in the Armed Forces or other government agencies. While these contracted services are necessary to support overseas contingency operations, they can also be very expensive. Multi-billion dollar linguist contracts are subject to the same pitfalls as any government contract. One GAO report noted several general contracting areas that need to be addressed in order to minimize waste and maximize

efficiencies. These areas include lack of DoD contractor oversight and management of personnel, failure to collect and distribute lessons learned, and lack of comprehensive training for contract oversight personnel and military commanders.[76] This lack of management and oversight can lead to enormous waste of U.S. taxpayer dollars. One audit of a multi-billion linguist contract revealed "the company had only provided approximately 80% of the contract requirement for linguists, but was burning funds at a rate congruent with a 100% fill rate.[77]

Finally, the Reserve Component is another worthwhile option to develop and maintain foreign-language capabilities to support our national security interests. The Reserve Component provides a vehicle to warehouse language capabilities. It can retain linguists transitioning from the Active Component along with heritage and other linguists who enter the service at a professional level.

The Reserve Component has also been used to develop linguists from scratch. After years of paltry resources, the Reserve Component is better resourced than ever before to accomplish this challenging task. However, the current strategy is designed to create a proficiency level that falls short of developing professional linguists. Despite these shortfalls, the Reserve Component remains a ripe environment for developing professional-level linguists if properly resourced against a sound training strategy.

Current State of Reserve Component Language Strategy

The Reserve Component has significant language capabilities based on linguists who are heritage speakers or acquired their skills through the university and/or other language immersion experiences. Many of these linguists gravitate to military positions that are language coded. However, for many of the high demand, challenging

languages like Arabic, Pashto, and Dari, the Reserve Component, like their Active

Component counterparts, relies on sending servicemembers to the Defense Language

Institute for resident courses ranging from 12 to 18 months. These courses are taught at

the basic level and aimed at graduating students at a limited working proficiency level of

2/2/2 in listening/reading/speaking on Interagency Roundtable Level (IRL) proficiency

scale.[78]

After 12 to 18 months of full-time language school, the vast majority of DLI

graduates have achieved a basic foundation for language proficiency. Most Reservists

then return to their civilian careers and resume drilling once a month with their assigned

unit and complete their two weeks of annual training. Reserve Component linguists are

by law only guaranteed to be paid for one weekend a month and two weeks of annual

training. With competing training requirements and the demands of preparing

servicemembers for deployment, language maintenance training goes quickly by the

way side.

Because of a lack of adequate time on the training schedule, the DoD's default

strategy is to encourage Reserve Component linguists to maintain their language skills

on their own time. One popular analogy compares the maintenance of language skills to

maintaining physical fitness. Physical fitness cannot just be accomplished once or twice

a month during drill weekend, but must become part of a servicemember's daily routine.

While this analogy has merit, such a strategy for maintaining foreign language

proficiency is folly and fails to capture the stark difference between the time required to

achieve a high level of physical fitness with the time required to achieve a professional

level of language proficiency. Furthermore, despite the enthusiasm and desire to

maintain their hard-earned language skills, most Reserve Component linguists' time is quickly consumed with the demands of family, work, school, and duties with their assigned unit among other commitments and activities. The harsh reality is most will not have the time to even maintain their language skills let alone progress to the level of professional proficiency required for most intelligence or diplomatic missions.

In recent years, the DoD has provided the Reserve Component limited funds for additional annual training programs geared toward maintaining and improving language proficiency. These funds include the Total Army Language Program,[79] the FOUNDRY program,[80] and other active duty opportunities to provide operational support to real-world missions. Even with competing time requirements, most Reservists are able to perform additional training to attend annual language refresher or language immersion training. Based on funding constraints, fewer are able to work for extended periods on active duty in support of operational requirements.

Since skills tend to atrophy following DLI, refresher courses serve to recapture lost capability. Typically, refresher courses are designed to move a linguist from the 1 and 1+ ranges back to the level 2 required for military occupational specialty qualification. The Navy Reserve has demonstrated success in helping Reservists from all branches to recapture lost capabilities and return to the level they had attained at DLI after 130 to 160 hours of full-time refresher instruction. In FY10, a survey of 108 Reservists revealed that following the refresher training, 80 percent improved in either reading or listening comprehension, while 40 percent improved in both areas.[81]

The reality is Reserve linguists rarely improve significantly over the proficiency levels achieved at the Defense Language Institute due to a lack of sufficient time

investment in the language. As a result, there is no significant impact on building a strategic reserve of language professionals within the Reserve Component and the tax payer doesn't get any significant return on investment. In short, developing a cadre of professional linguists is not a part-time business and ill suited to the Reserve Component in the current construct. The current framework is adept at developing linguists to a level-2 proficiency, but falls short of achieving the desired result of developing language professionals. These linguists would have value at basic social interactions on the battlefield, but fall short of the proficiency levels required to conduct an effective key leader engagement, conduct an interrogation or source meet, or correctly decipher intercepted communications.

<u>Bridging the Gap to Professional Expertise: Live Environment Training</u>

To reverse this trend, the Reserve Component has successfully implemented a simple, yet proven model that invests the necessary time beyond the DLI basic course and other short refresher courses. This model incorporates on-the-job or live environment training under the mentorship of more experienced linguists. The live environment training is centered on real-world language requirements that serve to motivate the linguist and provide a sense of accomplishment. The result is more linguists achieving a professional level while contributing to intelligence requirements to get there. The taxpayer reaps a return on the investment of training in the process.

One of the keys to this training model is to immerse linguists into live environment training immediately or soon after language school to solidify and build on the hard earned skills achieved at DLI. Unlike the combat arms branches that can only seek to approximate realistic training scenarios, linguists can work supporting real-world

missions year round. Live-environment training should last for a minimum of one year and preferably two or three years. The Air National Guard's 169th Intelligence Squadron has had success implementing a program of live environment training for their linguists. The focus of the program was to "learn language skills by flying operational missions or through post-mission processing."[82] Despite the success of this model, this National Guard unit reports limitations of funding to provide a comprehensive training experience for every linguist.[83] One career professional-level National Guard linguist currently serving as a battalion commander indicated, "The advantage to working language missions is that the language is encountered in true context, not contrived classroom and textbook presentations."[84]

Another critical component of this model is to ensure that "linguists in residency" supporting real-world requirements do so under the mentorship of experienced, professional-level linguists, including heritage speakers. A variation of the expression practice makes perfect is practice makes permanent. This idea underscores the importance of linguists receiving feedback on the quality of their work to ensure they are using the language correctly and not forming bad habits that must be unlearned later. The National Guard Counterdrug Program employs several hundred linguists nationwide who support ongoing national intelligence and law enforcement requirements. The program's production process allows less experienced linguists to work on live missions immediately. Their work is quality controlled by more experienced linguists who provide feedback allowing them to learn while not compromising the quality of the end product.[85] Linguists with limited working knowledge contribute while making steady progress toward improving their skills toward a professional-working

level. The program's Performance Improvement Manager points out that mentoring is the most important part of the production process and helps their linguists become certified to perform the job to standard.[86]

The program also allows for one hour per day of professional development time to participate in mission-focused group training or to focus on self-guided training to address areas of weakness based on the feedback received.[87] As members of National Guard units, servicemembers also take breaks from the live mission to attend unit sponsored language training including language immersion abroad. These break from the mission typically last two weeks and allow linguists to receive specialized training to address specific areas of weakness.

Maximizing Infrastructure

Allowing Reservists to work ongoing requirements not only implements a viable strategy to develop professional-level linguists, but also maximizes the use of existing infrastructure. The Joint Reserve Intelligence Connectivity Program (JRICP) was established in 1995 as a Secretary of Defense initiative to leverage Reserve Component intelligence personnel across all services to support worldwide intelligence requirements.[88] The support ranges from intelligence analysis and foreign language production to exercise support and participation. The program supports 28 sites also known as Joint Reserve Intelligence Centers and over 3500 workstations across unclassified, secret, and top secret networks.[89] This program has provided Reserve linguists opportunities to maintain and increase language proficiency in support of intelligence requirements. The support is accomplished during inactive duty training assemblies or drill weekends as well as extended periods of active duty on Active Duty

for Operational Support (ADOS) orders. Despite a robust information technology architecture, the program reports employing just over 110 full-time equivalents annually.[90] The capacity of the JRICP infrastructure far outweighs the amount of current utilization.

With more capacity available and the ability to expand the network for relatively low cost, programs such as the National Virtual Translation Center (NVTC)[91] and the National Language Service Corps[92] could help maximize existing infrastructure to work especially when classified networks are required. Both of these programs represent large reservoirs of heritage language professionals. If these heritage speakers can work alongside Reserve linguists and provide meaningful feedback, then the RC linguist's development toward professional-level proficiency could be accelerated.

The Reach Language Support Program (RLSP) employs Reserve linguists across the country who work in virtual teams out of many of the 28 Joint Reserve Intelligence Centers.[93] RLSP is another Reserve program geared to maintaining and improving language proficiency through allowing linguists of all levels to translate real-world documents and receive feedback from professional-level linguists.[94] Some of these sites allow contract linguists from various contracts including NVTC to utilize the facilities.[95] This combination of civilian and military linguists has the potential to establish an environment in which the Reserve military linguist with limited working knowledge can thrive.

Supporting Ongoing Language Requirements

Supporting ongoing language requirements is crucial to developing professional-level linguists. Some may argue that Reservists working on extended active duty

defeats the concept of having a Reserve Component and only adds to the Active

Component ranks. However, professional-level proficiency requires years to develop

whether the linguists are from the Reserve or Active Component. In an era in which

intelligence and foreign language proficiency are paramount to successful military

operations and diplomacy, the United States should maximize all effective and cost-

efficient sources to augment these capabilities.

In practice, many Reservists with civilian career aspirations would not likely be

able to continue on active duty following an initial one to three years of on-the-job live-

environment training. However, once a linguist achieves a professional-level of

proficiency, it is more realistic that monthly drills and annual training can be utilized

each year to maintain that expertise.

For those Reservists desiring an active-duty linguist career, this duty doesn't

conflict with unit obligations. In the National Guard, linguists supporting real-world

requirements work on these missions Monday through Friday, thus not interfering with

their weekend drills with their unit. When the unit requires them to attend a school or

deploy with the unit, the needs of the unit generally trump their linguistic duties.

The Reserve Component is arguably a better environment to develop

professional-level linguists than the Active Component. Active Component personnel

experience Permanent Changes of Station on a regular basis and deploy at a higher

rate than their Reserve Component counterparts. Such frequent changes can disrupt

the language maintenance efforts of linguists as well as the continuity of the operations

they support. One linguist operation in the National Guard Counterdrug Program reports

its personnel average around ten years of experience on the same regional targets, with some linguists carrying over 15 years of target knowledge and experience.[96]

<u>Policy Implications</u>

More research is necessary to validate this Reserve Component model for developing professional-level linguists. The aforementioned Reserve language programs supporting real-world requirements have provided a proof of concept and make for a natural starting point for further analysis. Additionally, data tracking linguist time-on-task following DLI is sorely needed. The issue is how much time investment is required for a Reservist to achieve professional-level proficiency with a positive return on investment based on support to national priorities requiring professional-level foreign language expertise.

Current policy has mechanisms that can be used to bring limited numbers of linguists onto active duty to support live-environment missions following language school to move toward professional-level proficiency. However, there is not a program of record that is designated for this express purpose. Supported agencies typically provide Active Duty for Operational Support (ADOS) funding if they want to leverage Reserve Component language expertise. Typical customers are interested in heritage speakers or linguists that have already professional-level proficiency. There is no program or funding that deliberately takes linguists from the school house and enrolls them in a live environment training experience to solidify and improve their skills.

Qualified Reserve linguists serving on ADOS orders are restricted to 1095 days of consecutive service in any four year rolling period.[97] This policy undermines the advantage Reservists could bring to continuity of operations of critical intelligence

missions. The policy also limits the potential of attracting more Reserve linguists who would willingly commit to a career if there were long-term job security.

The National Guard Counterdrug Program is an excellent model to create such a career program for Reserve linguists to support intelligence and other language requirements while developing to the professional level. The National Guard Counterdrug Program has all the legal authorities and management mechanisms in place to employ National Guard linguists against language requirements.[98] Unfortunately, linguists supporting the counterdrug program can only work missions that have a drug nexus. These linguists work on continuous active duty, can qualify for an active duty retirement; however, they don't count against the active duty end strength the Reserve Component must report to Congress. Congress also imposes a ceiling of no more than 4,000 personnel working nationally in the program. This ceiling serves to ensure fiscal responsibility over the long term since many of these linguists eventually will qualify for retirement benefits.[99]

The National Guard Counterdrug Program and other programs using ADOS funds have proven to be viable mechanisms to develop professional-level linguists. The program serves as a recruiting boon and attracts quality linguists or those motivated to learn a language. The program also enjoys higher rates of retention compared to the typical Reserve Component retention rates. A similar program for Reserve Component linguists supporting intelligence missions would enjoy similar results.

Based on the examples cited in this paper, Reserve linguist personnel with scarce, high-demand skills are playing a significant role in providing actionable intelligence and transcription/translation support to the warfighter and Combat Support

Agencies. The DoD should move forward in establishing a program of record that deliberately implements live-environment training as part of the methodology for developing professional-level linguists. Otherwise, DoD must question the merits of the status quo and the continued investment in a strategy that mostly delivers linguists with a limited working capability in an operating environment that demands professional-level linguists to secure U.S. interests.

A solution would entail Congress authorizing a program of record which would allow Reserve linguist and intelligence personnel to work on active duty in support of National Defense priorities. By amending Title 32 and Title 10, U.S. Code, this program could be modeled after the National Guard Counterdrug Program allowing for personnel to work on continuous orders, and qualify for separation pay and retirement without counting against active duty end strength.

Leveraging the Reserve Component more fully would contribute to increasing the pipeline of foreign language professionals. Much has been invested over the years in the Reserve Component without respecting time as the most critical factor to achieving professional-level proficiency. Language remains a part-time business only for linguists who have already achieved professional-level expertise.

Conclusion

Foreign language proficiency in the United States is a challenge that will take generations to solve. September 11th created a Sputnik moment for the Department of Defense and other federal agencies, but not for the nation as a whole. With a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan coupled with a struggling global economy, there may be no better time than the present to sell the American people on the importance of becoming

proficient in culture and foreign language and the commitment of time it will take to get

there. If, as some suggest, "improving America's proficiency in the world's languages is

a prerequisite for achieving lasting peace in the world,"[100] then it's about time America

heeded the call for greater foreign language capability.

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handling any complications or difficulties; can get the gist of most conversations on non-
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